

***UNIT 3:***  
***COMMAND STAFF***



## **OVERVIEW**

This unit will provide you with an overview of the Command Staff responsibilities. The Command Staff consists of the Public Information Officer (PIO), Safety Officer (SO), and Liaison Officer (LO), who report directly to the Incident Commander.

### **Public Information Officer**

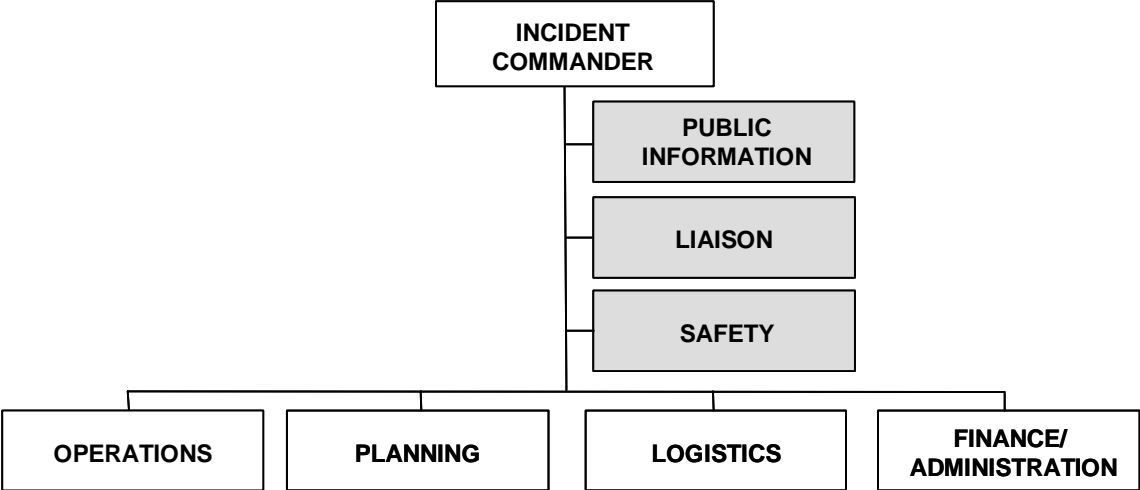
You will learn the various methods that the Public Information Officer may use to ensure that all incident sources have a course of action to provide appropriate information when operating under the Unified Command and in multijurisdictional incidents. The use of Assistant Public Information Officers, who may represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions, will be discussed. Emphasis will be placed on the reasons why an Incident Commander should activate the Public Information Officer role during large/complex incidents.

### **Liaison Officer**

This unit will emphasize the need to establish a Liaison Officer "point of contact" location at an incident to ensure that during multijurisdictional incidents responding agencies can assemble at one central location and coordinate agency efforts to support the Incident Commander. Discussion will focus on identifying the different types of agencies who may respond during an incident and why they are classified as an Assisting Agency or a Cooperating Agency.

### **Safety Officer**

You will review the role and responsibility of the Safety Officer during an emergency incident. The methods that the Safety Officer should use to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety, and to assess and anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations during emergency incidents will be discussed. You will also learn the critical reasons why an Incident Commander should activate the role of Safety Officer during emergency incidents, and will explore the need to establish Assistant Safety Officers because of the size and complexity of the incident. Emphasis will be placed on establishing Assistant Safety Officers from other involved agencies or jurisdictions. Also discussed will be the concept of assigning Assistant Safety Officers to specific responsibilities such as air operations, hazardous materials, etc.



### UNIT 3 OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize cues in order to determine the need to assign a Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer.
2. Identify what knowledge and experience is required of the Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer.
3. Recognize the duties and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer.
4. Describe the ICS Forms that are completed by the Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer.





The Public Information Officer is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations.

ICS Forms Completed by the Public Information Officer	
ICS 214	UNIT LOG

## THE CUES TO IMPLEMENT THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER POSITION

During large/complex incidents the responsibility to develop and release incident information to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations rests with the Incident Commander. If the Public Information Officer position is not activated to assimilate these responsibilities, frequently the Incident Commander can be interrupted and overwhelmed by requests for incident information by the news media and other agencies. These distractions can lessen the Incident Commander's efficacy in managing the incident appropriately. Activation of the Public Information Officer position during emergency incidents should be an automatic process within an Incident Management Team (IMT) structure.

## KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER POSITION

Individuals assuming the role of a Public Information Officer during emergency incidents should be trained as public information officers and understand the policies and procedures relative to handling public information. Frequently, during emergency incidents fire service personnel fill the position of Public Information Officer. Moreover, Public Information Officers from other responding agencies also can fill the Public Information Officer position if required. Several Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsored Public Information Officer courses are available to increase an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities for this position.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER**

### **1. Determine from the Incident Commander if there are Any Limits on Information Release**

Large/Complex incidents generally have high visibility and may have very sensitive issues surrounding the incident impacts. Oftentimes, the Incident Commander will limit the information that the Public Information Officer may release: for example, releasing sensitive information surrounding a terrorist event before it is cleared by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or releasing the names of fatalities without notifying the next of kin. Although many times this may not be accomplished easily, it must be considered before names are released.

### **2. Develop Material for use in Media Briefings**

The Public Information Officer should determine the displays and handouts required to conduct a news briefing that will support the information being released.

Mapping of the incident area that vividly displays what has occurred is extremely helpful in explaining the incident impacts to the public.

Good mapping can show the limitations the incident has placed on pedestrian movement, vehicle traffic, etc.

Location of temporary shelters that have been opened can be identified and can be very helpful in directing evacuees to these locations.

If a hazardous material release is occurring, the mapping may indicate the direction of a plume if present.

### **3. Obtain Incident Commander's Approval of Media Releases**

The Public Information Officer needs to have the Incident Commander read and sign the press release to ensure that he/she is fully aware of the information being released.

In large/complex incidents, the Public Information Officer will need to clear information with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) before releasing information.



**4. Inform Media and Conduct Media Briefings**

The Public Information Officer should identify a location near the Command Post to conduct media briefings. It should be clearly marked.

Times of the briefings should be posted, and they should be conducted regularly.

**5. Arrange for Tours and Other Interviews or Briefings that May be Required**

In large/complex incidents where a hot zone area has been identified, tours of the area may be conducted to ensure safe passage for the media.

During incidents in remote locations where access is limited, it is not advisable to allow the media into the area. In these cases, a limited number of media may be selected to enter the impact area and film or record the incident and then share the material with all the media present.

**6. Obtain Media Information that May be Useful to Incident Planning**

The Public Information Officer should gather as much information from the media as possible. Often the media has access to specific information that may assist the Incident Commander in developing incident strategies.

The Public Information Officer should share this information with the Incident Commander and also Command and General Staff.

**7. Maintain Current Information Summaries and/or Displays on the Incident and Provide Information on Status of Incident to Assigned Personnel**

Information summaries and displays can be helpful for the Planning Section in developing the next operational period Incident Action Plan (IAP) objectives.

The Public Information Officer not only is responsible for gathering information for the media, but also gathering information about the incident that may be helpful to the Command and General Staff functions.

**8. Maintain Unit/Activity Log (ICS Form 214)**





Incidents that are multijurisdictional, or that have several agencies involved, may require the establishment of the Liaison Officer position on the Command Staff

ICS Forms Completed by the Liaison Officer	
ICS 214	UNIT LOG

## **THE CUES TO IMPLEMENT THE LIAISON OFFICER POSITION**

Incidents that are multijurisdictional or have several agencies involved require the establishment of the Liaison Officer position on the Command Staff. During emergency incidents, various agency representatives will respond from assisting or cooperating agencies. Often these agencies will have tactical assignments to fulfill that need to be coordinated. If a Liaison Officer is not assigned, multi-agency representatives can disrupt the Incident Commander and possibly require him/her to become involved in multi-agency tactical assignments. These distractions can decrease the Incident Commander's capability to manage the incident. Activation of the Liaison Officer position during emergency incidents should be an automatic process within an IMT structure.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE LIAISON OFFICER POSITION**

Individuals assuming the role of Liaison Officer during emergency incidents should be trained as Liaison Officers and understand the policies and procedures relative to handling these duties. The need to understand the various capabilities of multijurisdictional agencies that respond to an emergency incident is consequential. These capabilities can greatly assist the Incident Commander in attaining the incident objectives. Frequently, fire service personnel during emergency incidents fill the Liaison Officer position. Moreover, other responding agency representatives can assume the Liaison Officer position if required. Interagency training for all responding agency representatives should be conducted to increase an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities for this position.

## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LIAISON OFFICER

### 1. Be a Contact Point for Agency Representatives

The Liaison Officer establishes communications with the representatives of outside agencies that have responded to the incident.

Often agency representatives are requested to report to a designated area near the Incident Command Post. This location serves as the meeting location point for all agency representatives during the incident, and is in close proximity to the Incident Commander.

### 2. Maintain a List of Assisting and Cooperating Agencies and Agency Representatives

The Liaison Officer should acquire a copy of the Check-In List (ICS Form 211) from the incident check-in locations to understand what agencies have arrived at the incident.

An assisting agency is one that is assisting on an incident and is directly contributing tactical resources to the agency or jurisdiction that is responsible for the incident. Thus, fire, police, or public works equipment sent to another jurisdiction's incident would be considered assisting agency resources.



A cooperating agency is one that supports the incident or supplies assistance other than tactical resources. Examples include the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, utility companies etc.

**3. Assist in Establishing and Coordinating Interagency Contacts**

Understanding that an agency has arrived at the incident allows the Liaison Officer to inform the Incident Commander of the presence of the agency representative. The Incident Commander then may direct the Liaison Officer to have the agency representative accomplish a specific incident support task. For example, shut down power and gas within the incident area.



**4. Keep Agencies Supporting the Incident Aware of Incident Status**

The Liaison Officer shall serve as the information conduit for all agency representatives working on the incident.

Periodic briefing times should be established by the Liaison Officer to ensure that important incident information is shared among all agencies operating on the incident.

**5. Monitor Incident Operations to Identify Current or Potential Interorganizational Problems**

The Liaison Officer should continue to monitor the operations of inter-agency activity to ensure that there is no conflict in agencies performing supporting activities for the incident.

**6. Participate in Planning Meetings, Providing Current Resource Status, Including Limitations and Capability of Assisting Agency Resources**

The Liaison Officer will attend Incident Planning meetings twice a day and share the support activities being performed by agencies operating on the incident.

On large/complex incidents with multiple cooperating and assisting agencies on the incident, the Liaison Officer may activate Assistant Liaison positions to help manage the position.

**7. Maintain Unit/Activity Log (ICS Form 214)**

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE**

**1. Ensure that all Agency Resources are Checked in Properly at the Incident**

The agency representative will ensure that all agency resources are checked in properly at the incident staging area or at the incident base. Agency representatives report to the Incident Liaison Officer.

This information can be obtained from the Check-In Sheet (ICS Form 211).

**2. Obtain Briefing from the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander**

In many jurisdictions agency representatives will wear incident vests that will identify the representatives' agencies.

The representative should receive a briefing of incident conditions from the Liaison Officer upon arriving at the incident.

Often a Liaison meeting area is established near the Incident Command Post and agency representatives are briefed at that location.

**3. Inform Assisting or Cooperating Agency Personnel on the Incident that the Agency Representative Position for that Agency has been Filled**

Notifying personnel can be accomplished by radio communications within the agency.

**4. Attend Briefings and Planning Meetings as Required**

Agency representatives will be required to attend meetings and have input into the preparation of the Incident Action Plan.

**5. Provide Input on the Use of Agency Resources Unless Resource Technical Specialists are Assigned from the Agency**

Often it is important for the representative to suggest to the Liaison Officer the type of resources available from the agency and the application those resources may be capable of performing during the incident.

If an agency provides a technical specialist then the specialist will be assigned to the Planning function and work under the Planning Section.

For example, a hydrologist from the Public Works Department assigned as a specialist because the incident has identified water pollution problems.

**6. Cooperate Fully with the Incident Commander and the General Staff on Agency Involvement at the Incident**

Representatives assigned to an incident should have full authority to make decisions on all matters affecting the agency's participation at the incident.

**7. Ensure the Well-Being of Agency Personnel Assigned to the Incident**

If an agency has a large personnel involvement in the incident, an Assistant Safety Officer from the agency should be assigned for safety of all agency personnel. Examples would be Assistant Public Works Safety Officer, Assistant Public Health Safety Officer, Assistant Law Enforcement Safety Officer, etc. (See the Safety Officer section of this course.)

**8. Advise the Liaison Officer of any Special Agency Needs or Requirements**

The representative should inform the Liaison Officer if there are limitations to the type of operations that their agency personnel may perform during the incident.

**9. Reports to Home Agency Dispatch or Headquarters on a Prearranged Schedule**

**10. Ensure that all Agency Personnel and Equipment are Accounted for Properly and Released Prior to Departure**

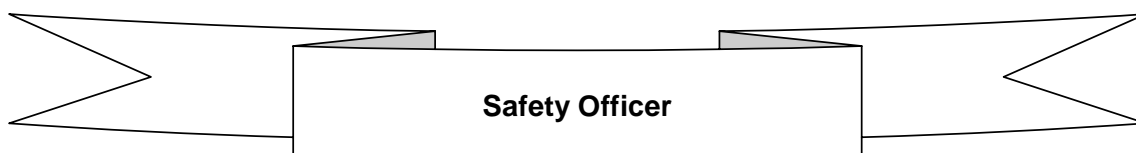
The representative should ensure that all agency personnel and equipment are properly accounted for and released prior to departure.

**11. Have a Debriefing Session with the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander Prior to Departure**

The representative should ensure that all required agency forms, reports, and documents are complete prior to departure.

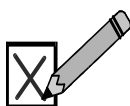
The representative should have a debriefing session with the Liaison Officer or the Incident Commander prior to departure.





The Safety Officer's function is to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety, and to assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations.

<b>ICS Forms Completed by the Safety Officer</b>	
<b>ICS 202</b>	INCIDENT OBJECTIVES Complete General Safety Message area
<b>ICS 208HM</b>	SITE SAFETY AND CONTROL PLAN Complete for Hazardous Materials Incidents.
<b>ICS 214</b>	UNIT LOG.



### Activity 3.1

Turn to Appendix C to view examples of completed ICS Forms. View the following forms that are completed by the Safety Officer.

1. ICS Form 202--Incident Objectives.
2. ICS Form 208HM--Site Safety and Control Plan.
3. ICS Form 214--Unit Log.

## THE CUES TO IMPLEMENT THE SAFETY OFFICER POSITION

During large/complex incidents the responsibility to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety and to assess and anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations rests with the Incident Commander. If the Safety Officer position is not activated to perform these responsibilities, incident personnel may be operating under unidentified unsafe conditions. The Safety Officer position is a fluid

position that requires continual visual observation of the entire emergency incident. One individual cannot judiciously function as the Safety Officer and Incident Commander during emergency incidents. The activation of the Safety Officer position allows the Incident Commander to focus on managing the incident. Lacking the activation of the Safety Officer position, responders can be placed in great danger. Activation of the Safety Officer position during emergency incidents should be an automatic process within an IMT structure.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE SAFETY OFFICER POSITION**

Individuals assuming the role of Safety Officer during emergency incidents should be trained as Safety Officers and understand the policies and procedures relative to handling hazardous and unsafe conditions. Generally, fire service personnel during emergency incidents fill the position of Safety Officer. NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer* should be adopted to increase individual knowledge, skills, and abilities for this position.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SAFETY OFFICER**

### **1. Participate in Planning Meetings**

The Safety Officer shall develop the Safety Message for the Incident Objectives (ICS Form 202).

The Safety Officer will participate in the Incident Action Plan meetings and complete additional safety messages and briefings as required.

### **2. Identify Hazardous Situations Associated with the Incident**

The Safety Officer will assess all hazardous situations surrounding the incident regarding personnel safety.

The Safety Officer must forecast potential hazardous situations for incident personnel and take steps to prevent personnel from being exposed to these hazards.

**3. Review the Incident Action Plan for Safety Implications**

Upon development and completion of the Incident Action Plan, the Safety Officer should complete careful review of work assignments for personnel safety on Assignment List (ICS Form 204).

If during the review of the Incident Action Plan the Safety Officer identifies additional safety concerns for personnel, then additional safety precautions should be noted.

**4. Exercise Emergency Authority to Stop and Prevent Unsafe Acts**

The Safety Officer should identify any unsafe acts being performed during the incident.

The Safety Officer may exercise emergency authority to stop unsafe acts if personnel are in imminent, life-threatening danger.

**5. Investigate Accidents that have Occurred Within the Incident Area**

**6. Assign Assistants as Needed**

There is only one Safety Officer for each incident, but the Safety Officer may have assistants as necessary.

These assistants may represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions. Examples include an Assistant Law Enforcement Safety Officer, Assistant Public Works Safety Officer, and Assistant Public Health Safety Officer.

Incident Assistant Safety Officers report through the Safety Officer on incident safety concerns of personnel.

**7. Review and Approve the Medical Plan**

The Safety Officer will review and approve the Medical Plan (ICS Form 206) for incident responders prepared by the Logistics Section Medical Unit.

**8. Review and Approve Site Safety and Control Plan (ICS Form 208-HM) as Required**

The Safety Officer will also review and approve Hazardous Materials Site Safety and Control Plan (ICS Form 208-HM) as required.

**9. Maintain Unit/Activity Log (ICS Form 214)**

### Unit 3: Command Staff Quiz

#### Directions

Read each question carefully, and choose the best answers(s) from the four choices. **NOTE: There may be more than one correct answer. You may use the ICS 420-1 as a reference tool.**

1. Safety is always a primary concern, and a Safety Officer should be established on every "working" incident. All of the following statements about the Safety Officer are correct except one. Which statement is **incorrect**?
  - a. There is only one Safety Officer per incident.
  - b. The Safety Officer may stop any unsafe action that poses an imminent threat to life safety.
  - c. The Safety Officer will review and approve the Medical Plan for incident responders.
  - d. The Assistant Safety Officers can report directly to the Incident Commander on Incident Action Plan safety concerns.
2. Which of the below listed **is not** a reason to establish a Public Information Officer position?
  - a. High visibility or sensitive incident.
  - b. Media interrupting the Incident Commander.
  - c. Need to alert, warn, or instruct the public.
  - d. All of the above are reasons.
3. What position would coordinate interagency activities with the agency representatives?
  - a. Public Information Officer.
  - b. Safety Officer.
  - c. Liaison Officer.
  - d. Situation Unit.
4. Cues that would lead to the activation of the Public Information Officer position include
  - a. This is a confirmed hazardous material incident.
  - b. Media requests for information are demanding.
  - c. The Safety Officer is overwhelmed with handling personnel injuries.
  - d. None of the above.

5. Cues that would lead to the need for a Liaison Officer position include
  - a. Need to provide diking and adsorbent materials for the gasoline runoff.
  - b. Maintaining flammable vapor monitoring of the general area and sewer system.
  - c. Two or more jurisdictions are involved in the incident.
  - d. All of the above.
  
6. Cues that would lead to the need for a Safety Officer include
  - a. Running flammable liquid fire seriously endangering firefighters.
  - b. Potential for sewer explosion, unburned gasoline entering sewer system.
  - c. Inhalation of gasoline vapors by firefighters.
  - d. All of the above.

### Correct Answers to Unit 3: Command Staff Quiz

#### Question 1:

*Answer D is the most correct response.* The Assistant Safety Officers should follow the chain of command and first discuss concerns with their supervisor – the incident Safety Officer.

#### Question 2:

*Answer D is the most correct response.* All of the responses listed indicate a high profile incident and should prompt the establishment of a Public Information Officer to prevent the Incident Commander from becoming inundated.

#### Question 3:

*Answer C is the most correct response.* The primary responsibility of the Liaison Officer is to interface with representatives from outside agencies.

#### Question 4:

*Answer B is the most correct response.* Anytime media and/or public demands for information begin to overwhelm the Incident Commander, a Public Information Officer should be appointed.

#### Question 5:

*Answer D is the most correct response.* Anytime incident activities involve outside agencies to the degree that it affects the Incident Commander's ability to concentrate on their responsibilities, a Liaison Officer should be appointed.

#### Question 6:

*Answer D is the most correct response.* A Safety Officer should be appointed for all working incidents, at a minimum, whenever firefighter or civilians are in harm's way as a result of the emergency and/or the incident scene presents potential safety hazards.